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# HEBREW SERVITUDE,

AND

# AMERICAN SLAVERY.

A vast majority of the American people turn, as yet, to the Bible as the ultimate authority in every question of morals. The public sentiment of the country cannot be arrayed, as yet, in opposition to an undisputed injunction of the Word of God; nor can any immoral practice be successfully resisted, until it can be clearly shown that it stands condemned by the Holy Scriptures.

Hence the untiring efforts which are made by the friends and supporters of American slavery to find in the Bible a warrant for the system, or, at the very least, to prove that God has not there expressly condemned such an enslaving of man. It is therefore of the utmost importance that the actual teachings of the Bible upon human servitude should be candidly examined by all, for this fearful question of American slavery will in the end be determined by the verdict of God's own Word. If Southern slaveholding is condemned as a sin, when judged by the authority of the Bible, the public sentiment of this nation will demand and certainly obtain its removal. If, on the other hand, it may fairly claim the sanction of the Bible, or, if it can even escape condemnation by a candid exposition of its teachings, then we think

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this system of bondage is impregnable, except it be overthrown by revolution and the shedding of blood, or, unless the authority of such a Bible should be utterly rejected; and the churches thus expounding a revelation from God, should be forsaken as false.

The chief and only effectual support of slavery in this country, is found in the belief of the masses of the people that it is either sanctioned by, or at least not condemned by the Scriptures; and this conviction has been produced, and is most watchfully strengthened and guarded, by nearly the whole religious influence of the land.

To rescue the Word of God from the hands of those who have compelled it into a defence of oppression, and to show that its authority demands freedom for all men, and allows property in none, is the first work of the friends of the slave. If successful in this, the triumph is sure, but failing in this, it will be found impossible by any other method to arouse the public conscience.

If in the Word of God there can be found any warrant, defence, or apology for the American slaveholder, it must be in the laws and practice of the Hebrews, under the Mosaic dispensation. If in that commonwealth where God Himself was the law-giver and ruler, He established, approved, or permitted such a system of servitude as prevails in a portion of our own country, it will be found very difficult to convince the people of its wrongfulness now, by any arguments drawn from a consideration of the remoteness of that period, the different character of the Jewish people, or the progress which society has since made, or the additional light and knowledge which we enjoy. If God, at any time, and to any people, permitted such a system, with his special sanction, the masses of the people, we may well fear, will



be slow to believe that it is positively forbidden in this age, and to the American people.

In the hope of being instrumental in shedding some light upon the teachings of the Bible, this tract has been prepared, in order that the reader may see at a glance the points of resemblance, or contrast, between the servitude allowed by Jehovah among the Hebrews, and the slaveholding system of the United States.

It will be seen first of all that American slavery rests for its basis and starting point, upon a principle or assumption entirely different from the radical idea of the Hebrew servitude, and springing from two germs or ideas, thus distinct in nature, they could no more become similar systems, than a kernel of wheat could produce a bramble, or the thistle-seed an oak.

If we can once fix clearly in our minds, this essential difference of nature between these two forms of servitude, we shall perceive that each is the natural outgrowth from its own root, that there are really few points of resemblance between them, that they present almost nothing in common.

The whole structure of the Hebrew servitude, is reared upon the single idea that the servant is a man, simply owing labor for a limited period to his fellow-man. The whole Hebrew code is constructed upon this idea. It contemplates throughout a *man* as the object of its legislation, and contains not a single provision which deprives the servant of one essential right or privilege of the immortal human being. Not one of its enactments is suitable for a mere brute or a thing. The *manhood* of the servant is never overlooked.

Our own slave code starts from, and proceeds throughout upon the exactly opposite idea, that the slave is *not a*

*man*, but a brute, without rights, a mere piece of property, without personality in law. *In theory*, it regards the slave not as an immortal, free agent, accountable to God; not as a man, but, with almost no exceptions, as a mere chattel, having either no power or no right to will, and responsible to the owner alone. The Hebrew servant then was a man, and deprived by law of no right whose loss would make him less than a man. The American slave, on the contrary, is not a man, but a mere chattel, a piece of property, to which the law carefully forbids every privilege, the granting of which, would be an admission that the slave is a man. Slavehood and manhood are by the theory of Southern laws, the opposite of each other.

The writer knows of no exception to this rule in favor of the rights of the slave; but by a refinement in cruelty, the poor victim is sometimes recognized by the law as a person, in order that the State may *put him to death*, as a man. From these two opposite ideas of manhood and brutehood, or chattelism—let us now trace some of the leading provisions of the Hebrew bond-service, and the American slave code, and observe how they correspond throughout to the leading idea of each. One code is suitable for the regulation of a man, only, the other is applicable to a brute, a thing, but not to a human being. That the contrast may the more distinctly appear, some of the principal provisions are presented in parallel columns:

## HEBREW LAW.

## SLAVE CODE.

The Jew was forbidden, on pain of death, to steal; that is, seize a man by force	The whole system of American slavery rests upon the stealing of men,
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## HEBREW LAW.

as a slave, or hold him after he had been stolen by another.—Ex. xxi: 16.

The Jew might purchase a heathen, and might hold him to service, *not* as *property*, for a *limited period*, viz: until the Jubilee; but by circumcision, he was, by law, placed within the national covenant, by law, he was instructed in the same manner as the Hebrews themselves, and he could at any moment, by embracing the Jewish religion, become invested with all the rights and privileges of a Hebrew; and, under no circumstances could he be *sold*. The Hebrew servant as a man, was trained for usefulness here, and by careful religious instruction, for happiness hereafter.

## SLAVE CODE.

or the holding of them after they or their ancestors have been stolen by others. By the Hebrew law, therefore, every slaveholder in the South, has incurred the death penalty. He has either stolen men, or they are found in his hand.

The American slaveholder buys the slave, not as a man, but as mere property, as he would a horse; he is not held to service, but *owned*; not for a limited period, but for life; he is not instructed but shut out, by law, from all means of improvement; he can in no manner obtain any rights of an American, and he may be sold and re-sold, at pleasure. The American slave is held as a brute, in brutal ignorance, by *the laws*, and is shut out from all correct knowledge of God or the way of salvation.

## HEBREW LAW.

The Hebrew servant, as a man, was entitled to marriage, and enjoyed the society of wife and children, from whom he could not be separated, and he, therefore, lived as the head of a family, according to the appointment of God, and was held responsible for the proper performance of family duties.

The Hebrew servant was guarded, by law, against all cruel treatment, so that if his master struck out an eye or tooth, or (by inference) otherwise maimed him, he went out free.

The Hebrew servant could become the owner of property, and could in some cases become the heir of his master's estate, and in

## SLAVE CODE.

The slaves are allowed no marriage, nor family, nor wife, nor children, nor home, in any proper sense of these terms, nor in any sense in which horses cannot be said, to have families, wives and children. In both cases it is the brutal relation and not the human; and a slave is not considered capable of adultery, even though a church member; any more than a horse. Their offspring are bought and sold precisely like the young of cattle. They are CATTLE by law

The slave is exposed to every variety of cruelty and torture, at the will of the master, and the law sanctions any punishment, even death if deemed necessary, to subdue him.

The slave is forbidden by law, to own anything however trifling, nor can he inherit any property from another; the law considers



## HEBREW LAW.

both cases his manhood is recognised.

The Hebrews were positively forbidden to arrest the fugitive slave, or return him to his master. Judea was by constitutional law, made an asylum for the oppressed forever.—DEUT. xxiii: 15, 16.

By the Hebrew law, there was, at stated periods, universal emancipation of all the servants in the land, and thus periodically the whole system was broken up.

Hebrew servitude was a system designed for, and operating upon men.

Fundamentally and entirely distinct and even opposite to each other, there is not only no possibility of justifying American slaveholding from the Hebrew servitude by reasoning from the one to the other; they admit not even of comparison, but only of being contrasted feature

## SLAVE CODE.

him a brute, incapable, like an ox, of inheritance or ownership.

Our own fugitive law, in express violation of God's Law, commands the seizure and return of the escaping slave, and converts our whole national soil into a hunting ground for the master, and every citizen into a hunter of men.

American slavery resists every effort of emancipation, and claims perpetual ownership in the slaves, as not men, but brutes, or chattels only.

The slave code is contrived for the security of property, for things and brutes, and not men.

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with feature—one treats only of men, the other only of brutes and chattels.

To attempt, therefore, to defend American slavery from the Bible, is utterly to misrepresent the spirit and intention of the Hebrew Constitution, and to charge the Creator and Redeemer of man, with establishing a code of laws for the purpose of crushing to the condition of a brute or chattel, the immortal creature, which he made in His own image, and this is a libel upon God. Did Christ die for beasts or chattels? Did he shed his blood for the redemption of a piece of property?

THE END.

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